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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 001337

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz and other media reported that the deal between Hizbullah and Israel for the return of abducted IDF reservists Goldwasser and Regev will be delayed. Ha'aretz quoted a political source in Jerusalem as saying that PM Ehud Olmert believes that as is the deal can not be brought to the cabinet for approval. Ha'aretz reported

that Mossad chief Meir Dagan and Shin Bet head Yuval Diskin are concerned that the deal would set a dangerous precedent that could put the life of Gilad Shalit, as well as the lives of any future Israeli soldiers captured, at risk. Contrary to what had been previously reported, it appears that Hezbollah has revived its demand for the release of Palestinian prisoners as part of the exchange. Ha'aretz quoted sources in Olmert's bureau as saying yesterday that the demand for the release of Palestinians is a major stumbling block. However, security sources were quoted as saying that the Palestinian "element" was overplayed by Olmert's aides for reasons that are not clear to them. Ha'aretz added that of senior figures in the defense establishment, only Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi, who feels it is time to close the Goldwasser-Regev case, is in favor of the deal. The media reported that Olmert is also considering proclaiming the two reservists dead.

The media reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice has issued a temporary injunction barring the state from changing the status quo at the Gaza border crossings until noon on Monday, following a petition by Gilad Shalit's father, Noam. Yediot reported that Noam Shalit was disappointed by Amos Gilad's explanation of why the cease-fire deal was struck without it involving Gilad's release. Yesterday Ha'aretz reported that Israel intends to demand that Hamas alter significantly the list of Palestinian prisoners it is demanding for Shalit. The dispute, according to Al-Ayyam, concerns 100 of the 350 prisoners that Israel is expected to release in the first phase of the deal. Over the weekend media reported that Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh denied on Friday that his organization had agreed to stop weapons smuggling from Egypt as part of the cease-fire with Israel. The media reported that yesterday Israel permitted the transfer of basic supplies into Gaza through the Sufa and Karni crossings -- but only those considered to meet humanitarian needs.

The media quoted Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak as saying yesterday he is determined that members of his party support the first reading of a bill on Wednesday to disperse the Knesset. Prime Minister Olmert has threatened to kick Labor ministers who vote in favor of the bill out of the government. The media reports a growing fracture in labor with ministers Yuli Tamir and Raleb Majadele against Barak's position while Amir Peretz and Nadia Hilou are in favor. Labor is expected to hold a meeting of its MKs this afternoon to vote on a course of action.

The media reported that yesterday Iran's defense minister, Mostafa Mohammad Najjar, warned of a "devastating" response to any Israeli attack on his country. Najjar was responding on Iranian state television to a New York Times story that Israel had carried out large-scale military exercises over the Mediterranean. Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that the IAF significantly increased the number of overseas drills it has participated in over the past two years.

Media reported that visiting French President Nicolas Sarkozy told President Shimon Peres yesterday that "if we do not talk with [Syrian President Bashar] Assad, there will not be peace in the Middle East." On Sunday Yediot reported that the plan to dedicate the Red Sea-Dead Sea canal in a ceremony attended by Sarkozy has been cancelled, because the Jordanians are angry over Israel's behavior on this matter. According to Yediot, Jordanian official representatives recently contacted Israeli government officials asking whether Israel was still keeping its commitment to carry out the examination of the project before implementing it.

On Sunday Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that statements made by Robert Kagan, a political adviser to the Republican presidential candidate John McCain, elicited furious responses in Jordanian political circles. Kagan said that McCain believed that Jordan was the Palestinians' natural homeland and would serve as the best solution to the refugee issue.

Leading media reported that two police investigators will leave for the U.S. today for a judicial inquiry to probe the path of Morris Talansky's financial dealings. They will be visiting New York, Washington, and Las Vegas.

Over the weekend the media reported that three Israeli hikers were injured -- one seriously -- in a shooting attack in the West Bank.

Yesterday Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted said sources in the Palestinian Interior Ministry as saying that 260 Arab security officials from Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco will shortly arrive at the PA's training bases in Jericho to train the Palestinian forces that are loyal to Abu Mazen,.

Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that Nahum Liss, "Israel's top airport security official," will make periodic reviews of anti-terrorist measures at Los Angeles International Airport under an agreement signed last week during a visit here by LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

Ha'aretz reported that yesterday PM Olmert extended the tenure of Mossad chief Meir Dagan for a second time.

Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer has authored a new book, "Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East."

Globes quoted Arab journalists and viewers as saying that the U.S.-sponsored Alhurra-TV has a "basic problem: "It is boring." Investigative pieces are rare, and critics say the channel generally doesn't make waves.

Ha'aretz quoted Minister Ami Ayalon as saying yesterday that Israeli Arabs should be grunted "cultural independence."

Over the weekend the media reported that UNICEF has severed ties with Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev over allegations that he helped fund construction in the West Bank.

Mideast:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "There is only one correct way out of the entanglement Barak has got himself into: The Labor ministers must quickly resign collectively, on Wednesday, before the vote and the dismissals. Only such a step will prod Kadima to demand that Olmert take leave on the grounds of incapacity, since he insists on refusing to resign."

Dov Weisglass, who was former prime minister Ariel Sharon's top diplomatic advisor, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "A car has never been handed over in exchange for a promise by the buyer to come around one day and talk about the price. Particularly an armed and masked buyer."

Liberal columnist Yigal Sarna addressed Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Yediot Aharonot: "The door of opportunity has opened for Gilad's return, and it must not be allowed to close with him behind it."

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University, wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom: "Those who believe that an attempt to appease Hassan Nasrallah's organization regarding the Lebanese prisoners or the Sheba Farms will quench its thirst and reduce the threat it represents against Israel. are wrong and deceitful."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "During a time when a new administration is set to assume power in the United States, Sarkozy's France can play the role of global superpower, and not just a temporary one."

Block Quotes:

I. "Threats and Deeds"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (6/23): "The only act Barak has taken is the vote for the Knesset's dissolution,

but the significance of the preliminary reading is that there are least three more major steps necessary for a bill to become law, assuming it receives majority support.... The immediate question is how to deal with ministers who are in theory opposed to their government's continuation. On this, Olmert draws the threat of dismissal. He is threatening in order to defeat Labor, or because he wants to provoke a crisis whose resolution will require time -- that same amount of time he wants to gain while the criminal proceedings against him continue and the Knesset approaches the end of the summer session. This is a game of minds and strength between Olmert and Barak. So far, it seems that Barak is losing. He selected an odd arena -- early elections -- which he definitely does not want.... Instead of Olmert having to justify every single day and every single hour why he is remaining in the prime minister's post, Barak will be forced to justify why he is eager to stay in the Olmert government. There is only one correct way out of the entanglement Barak has got himself into: The Labor ministers must quickly resign collectively, on Wednesday, before the vote and the dismissals. Only such a step will prod Kadima to demand that Olmert take leave on the grounds of incapacity, since he insists on refusing to resign."

II. "Don't Open the Crossings "

Dov Weisglass, who was former prime minister Ariel Sharon's top diplomatic advisor, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (6/23): "Israel's consent to open the border crossings and (gradually) to renew the transfer of goods into Gaza, and only then -- if at all -- to renew the negotiations for the release of the soldier, is an act of folly, which is worse, as we know, than malice. This will effectively prevent any possibility of releasing the soldier [Gilad Shalit] within a reasonable time span and under acceptable conditions.

Many months ago, Hamas presented Israel with a list of hundreds of the worst murderers, and made their release a condition for giving up the soldier. It is almost impossible to accept this list.... Israel has great and understandable difficulty in meeting the extortionist release demands, and for this reason Gilad Shalit is wasting away in captivity. The only way to force Hamas to discuss this issue quickly and efficiently is an ongoing and toughQas much as possibleQcontinuation of the blockade and economic siege.... This is how used cars are sold: The car key is handed over in exchange for cash or a certified bank check. A car has never been handed over in exchange for a promise by the buyer to come around one day and talk about the price. Particularly an armed and masked buyer. Staff Sgt. Gilad Shalit deserves treatment at least as good as a used car receives."

III. "No Excuses"

Liberal columnist Yigal Sarna addressed Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Yediot Aharonot (6/22): "Mr. Prime Minister, imagine that the kidnapped soldier held by the Gazans is your younger son, Shaul. Imagine that the woman mourning his fate who does not sleep at night, and when she does fall asleep she dreams of her son lying on the floor of a dark room, is [your wife] Aliza. Think that Gilad is Shaul, who instead of looking for an apartment in Tel Aviv for his young family is being moved in Gaza from room to room, tied, bound, sometimes gagged, and always frightened. Waiting for the footsteps of the guard or those who have come to take him.... Like this country no longer cares for the elderly or for children, for the hungry or for workers, it also does not care enough, or as it has promised to do, for those who were kidnapped. Now, in this moment of mercy in June 2008, when the air has calmed for a moment and [Lebanese terrorist Samir] Kuntar will return to his home that has waited for him as the Shalit home has done, the door of opportunity has opened for Gilad's return, and it must not be allowed to close with him behind it. Gilad must be brought back as though he were Shaul or any other Israeli child whose loving parents delivered him over to the state so that he would guard it, and it will bring him back home during a time of distress and without excuses."

IV. "No Limit to Cynicism"

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University, wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom (6/23): "The lesson [that can be learned from the prisoner-swap contacts with Hizbullah] is clear: Those who

believe that an attempt to appease Hassan Nasrallah's organization regarding the Lebanese prisoners or the Sheba Farms will quench its thirst and reduce the threat it represents against Israel. are wrong and deceitful. Israel must understand and internalize who is the enemy facing it and how necessary it is to behave cautiously and considerate towards it."

IV. "Parisian Option"

Ha'aretz editorialized (6/22): "What does Sarkozy possess that justifies such excitement [in Israel]? First of all, the French President stresses his full commitment to Israel's security, to rooting out anti-Semitism in his country, and his opposition to Iran's attempts at nuclear armament.... Yet Sarkozy's love for Israel is not backed up by a coherent Mideast policy.... The lofty respect with which he received Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi during the latter's visit to Paris last December is a first indication that, much like his predecessors, there is a gap between Sarkozy's words and deeds.... [Still], during a time when a new administration is set to assume power in the United States, Sarkozy's France can play the role of global superpower, and not just a temporary one. It can advance the Israeli-Syrian track and expedite the discussions over the question of Sheba Farms and the drawing of a permanent border between Israel, Syria, and Lebanon. France can also encourage the implementation of the Arab peace initiative and raise its voice fearlessly against the Iranian nuclear threat. To assume the complex role that it has sought for itself in the Middle East, France will be required to stake out a position rooted in principle, moral legitimacy and strategic clarity. This will require great courage on its part. Welcome to Jerusalem, Sarko."

JONES